

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-2, 6-7, 10-11, 13-14 and 20-22 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 6, and 10 have been amended. Claims 20-22 have been added to more completely claim the invention. Support for new claims 20-22 is found, for example, at page 31, lines 4-14 of the present application. No new matter has been added.

Claims 1-2, 6-7, 10 and 13-14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,095,050 (Figov) in view of EP0782106 (Brand et al.). Claim 11 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Figov in view of Brand and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,138,566 (Sakamoto). These rejections are respectfully traversed. Applicant hereby requests reconsideration and allowance of the claims in view of the following arguments.

Regarding the obviousness rejection of independent claims 1, 6 and 10, method claim 1 has been amended to recite the steps of obtaining coating conditions for the particular area of the print to be coated, and converting the obtained coating conditions into control data for the droplet nozzles corresponding to the particular area. Apparatus claims 6 and 10 have been similarly amended to recite an instruction device for obtaining coating conditions for the particular area to be coated. Claims 6 and 10 have been further amended to recite that the area determining means is for converting the coating conditions into control data for the droplet spray nozzles, and that the control means is for selectively driving droplet spray nozzles corresponding to the particular area based on the control data. These amendments are supported, for example, at page 28, lines 4-22, and at page 31, lines 4-15 of the present application. No new matter has been added.

In the inventions of amended claims 1, 6 and 10, “coating conditions” such as droplet size or droplet number are specified to enable the thickness of the coating material applied to a

selected area to be easily changed. The cited Figov reference teaches that a coating material is sprayed through a nozzle corresponding to a particular area of the print; however, Figov does not teach or even suggest that different coating conditions can be specified; e.g., to change a coating material thickness, as claimed. Brand does not teach or suggest specifying coating conditions either.

Neither Figov nor Brand teaches or suggests amended claim 1's steps of obtaining coating conditions for the particular area of the print to be coated, and converting the obtained coating conditions into control data for the droplet nozzles corresponding to the particular area. Likewise, neither Figov nor Brand teaches or suggests amended claim 6 and 10's instruction device for obtaining coating conditions for the particular area to be coated, area determining means for converting the coating conditions into control data for the droplet spray nozzles, or control means for selectively driving droplet spray nozzles corresponding to the particular area based on the control data. Therefore, any combination of Figov and Brand, however made, would still be missing these important claimed features, and it would not have been obvious to add these features to any Figov/Brand combination.

Consequently, amended independent claims 1, 6 and 10 are patentable, as are claims 2, 7, 13 and 14, which depend from claims 1, 6 and 10, respectively.

Regarding the obviousness rejection of dependent claim 11 based on Figov, Brand and Sakamoto, the Sakamoto reference does not teach or suggest the recited instruction device, area determining means, or control means of claim 10, from which claim 11 depends, missing from Figov and Brand. Therefore, any combination of Figov, Brand and Sakamoto, however made, would be missing these important claimed features, and it would not have been obvious to add these features to any Figov/Brand/Sakamoto combination.

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Consequently, claim 11 is patentable.

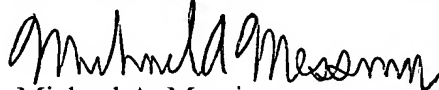
New claims 20-22 are also patentable by virtue of their dependence from claims 1, 6 and 10 respectively.

Thus, it is believed that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Applicant therefore respectfully requests an early and favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application. If there are any outstanding issues which might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is invited to call Applicant's representative at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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